

Message Text

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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 163

USIA WASHDC

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

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USIA/IAA FOR DAWSON

BRUSSELS FOR FAA

PASS AID, FAA, FAS/USDA

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: AFSP, PFOR, NI

SUBJECT: FMG REQUISITION OF EMBASSY ANNEX

REF: LAGOS 6574

SUMMARY: WE URGENTLY NEED DEPARTMENT'S GREEN LIGHT ON USG FINANCING OF ALL COSTS OF MOVING OUT OF EMBASSY ANNEX AND INTO NEW QUARTERS, IN RETURN FOR WHICH WE THINK WE MAY BE ABLE TO EXTRACT FMG COMMITMENT TO GIVE US OPEN-ENDED RENT-FREE OCCUPANCY OF NEW QUARTERS. WE HAVE ALREADY OBTAINED CONSIDERABLE "FRIEND-IN-COURT" ASSISTANCE FROM MEA IN FACILITATING MOVE, AND BELIEVE CONTINUED MEA SUPPORT AND PARTICULARLY GENERAL GOWON'S PERSONAL INTEREST IN THIS MATTER SHOULD KEEP MILITARY HOT-HEADS FROM TRYING ANOTHER PRESSURE TACTIC SIMILAR TO RECENT 24-HOUR MILITARY OCCUPATION OF ANNEX PREMISES. BELIEVE SUCH A BARGAIN VERY MUCH IN INTEREST OF IMPROVED US/NIGERIAN RELATIONS AND WOULD GO A LONG WAY TOWARD REMOVING A LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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LONG-FESTERING AND NOW CRITICAL PROBLEM. TOTAL NEW MONIES REQUIRED

BETWEEN NOW AND END NEXT YEAR IN NEIGHBORHOOD OF \$360 THOUSAND, BUT WE COULD REASONABLY EXPECT ENTUALLY TO HAVE TO FIND A SUBSTANTIAL PORTION OF THIS TOTAL ANYWAY IF FMG REFUSES TO FOREGO TEMPTATION OF CHARGING US RENT AFTER DECEMBER 31, 1976 WHEN CURRENT LEASE AT MOLONEY STREET EXPIRES. END SUMMARY

AT HIS URGENT REQUEST I MET WITH MEA PERMSEC IYALLA FOR TWO HOURS JULY 11, THUS ADVANCING BY 24 HOURS THE DISCUSSION CONCERNING EMBASSY ANNEX THAT HE AND I ARRANGED IN OUR LAST MEETING JULY9. AS AGREED THEN AND CONFIRMED AT DCM'S SESSION JULY 10 WITH IYALLA'S STAGG, PURPOSE OF JULY 11 MEETING WAS TO REACH MUTUAL AGREEMENT ON AS MANY ISSUES REMAINING BETWEEN US AS POSSIBLE, AND IDENTIFY THOSE QUESTIONS STILL TO BE SETTLED OR PASSED FOR DECISION TO OUR RESPECTIVE HIGHER AUTHORITIES. ALTHOUGH IYALLA HAD SAID HE WANTED THE MEETING TO BE WITH ME "ALONE," DEPUTY MEA PROTOCOL DIRECTOR MGBOKWERE WAS PRESENT DURING MOST OF THE DISCUSSION.

2. IYALLA INITIATED THE CONVERSATION BY REITERATING THE UNHAPPINESS OF HIS MINISTRY " AND THE SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL" AT BRIGADIER OBASANJO'S ACTION IN SENDING TROOPS OF THE ENGINEERING BATTALION JULY 9 TO OCCUPY THE MOLONEY STREET PRESISES. HE SAID THAT GENERAL GOWON PERSONALLY ORDERED THEIR REMOVAL IN EARLY AFTERNOON OF JULY 9. HE ATTRIBUTED THE FAILURE OF THE TROOPS TO LEAVE BEFORE NIGHTFALL TO "POOR COMMUNICATIONS IN THIS CITY," STATING THAT HE " HAD NOT DARED" TO GO BACK TO THE HEAD OF STATE WHEN WE INFORMED HIM THAT THE TROOPS WERE STILL THERE DESPITE HIS PROMISE EARLIER IN THE DAY. IYALLA CONFIRMED WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED FROM OTHER SOURCES, I.E., THAT GENERAL GOWON WAS EXTREMELY ANGRY UPON LEARNING OF THE MILITARY ACTION AND HAD ORDERED MEA TO "STRAIGHT EN THIS BUSINESS OUT PROMPTLY" WITH THE AMERICAN EMBASSY.

3. IYALLA PLEADED THAT THE EMBASSY NO "DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE" TO PROVIDE PROMPT TANGIBLE EVIDENCE OF OUR COMMITMENT TO LEAVING MOLONEY STREET. HE SAID THE FMG VERY MUCH APPRECIATED THE MANNER IN WHICH THIS MATTER HAD BEEN HANDLED BY THE EMBASSY DURING THE PAST MONTH AND WAS SEVERLY EMBARRASSED BY THE JULY 9 AFFAIR. NONETHELESS, WITH THE SENDITIVITIES OF CERTAIN MILITARY PERSONNEL NOW RUBBED RAW AS A RESULT OF THE FAILURE OF BRIGADIER OBASANJO'S PLOY, DEMONSTRATED COMPLIANCE WITH FMG DESIRES BECAME ALL THE MORE NECESSARY. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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4. GOING BEYOND HIS PREVIOUS VAGUE STATEMENT THAT THE FMG "WOULD BE FLEXIBLE" REGARDING CONTINUED US OCCUPANCY OF OKOTIE EBOH QUARTERS AFTER THE EXPIRATION OF OUR PRESENT MOLONEY STREET LEASE, IYALLA

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STATED FLATLY THAT THE FMG WAS PREPARED TO PERMIT US TO REMAIN

AT OKOTIE EBOH UNTIL OUR NEW CHANCERY WAS READY FOR OCCUPANCY.

5. IYALLA REITERATED HIS GOVERNMENT'S INABILITY TO FINANCE THE COSTS OF THE MOVE, STATING THAT FMG WILLINGNESS TO LET US STAY ON AT OKOTIE EBOH WOULD RELIEVE US OF THE COSTLY MOVE WE WOULD OTHERWISE HAVE TO MAKE WHEN THE MOLONEY LEASE EXPIRES. IYALLA WAS EQUALLY ADAMANT AGAINST REIMBURSEMENT OF USIS FOR RENOVATION EXPENSES INCURRED IN MOVING INTO PRESENT MOLONEY STREET QUARTERS. WHEN I REFERRED TO THE ROUGHLY \$200 THOUSAND PRE-PAID RENT ON MOLONEY PROPERTY THAT WE WOULD EXPECT TO BE FORFEITING, HE COUNTERED THAT WE SHOULD CONSIDER THAT LOSS AS WRITTEN OFF BY THE GOVERNMENT'S WILLINGNESS TO GIVE US RENT-FREE OCCUPANCY UNTIL DECEMBER 31, 1976. HE REPEATED HIS PREVIOUS CONTENTION THAT

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OKOTIE EBOH SPACE WOULD CURRENTLY BE ASSESSED AT MUCH HIGHER RENTAL VALUE THAN FOR THE SPACE WE ARE VACATING.

6. I RESTATED THE DEPARTMENT'S VIEW THAT THE FMG YOULD PAY FOR THIS MOVE SINCE IT WAS BEING MADE AT THE REQUEST OF AND FOR THE SOLE CONVENIENCE OF THE FMG. I SUGGESTED, HOWEVER, THAT WE PUT ASIDE UNTIL

LATER IN OUR DISCUSSION ANY FURTHER CONSIDERATION OF THE FINANCIAL ISSUE SO THAT I COULD TELL HIM WHAT THE EMBASSY NOW PROPOSED TO DO TO SATISFY THE NEED FOR QUICK AND VISIBLE ACTION. I SAID I WOULD SEEK

URGENT CONCURRENCE FROM CONCERNED WASHINGTON AGENCIES FOR THESE ACTIONS.

A. WITHIN A FORTNIGHT AID PERSONNEL WOULD START MOVING TO THE AID APARTMENTS AT 14 ELSIE FEMI PEARSE ON VICTORIA ISLAND. THEY WOULD MOVE INTO SPACE VACATED BY AID FAMILIES EITHER ABOUT TO BE TRANSFERRED OR FOR WHOM I THOUGHT OTHER QUARTERS COULD BE FOUND. WE WOULD COMPLETE THE MOVE OF AID PERSONNEL TO ELSIE FEMI PEARSE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, THUS VACATING FOUR FLOORS OF THE MOLONEY STREET BUILDING.

B. WE WOULD SIMILARLY MOVE OUR MEDICAL UNIT TO ELSIE FEMI PEARSE, WITHIN A FORTNIGHT IF POSSIBLE, THUS CLEARING AN ADDITIONAL HALF FLOOR AT MOLONEY STREET.

C. MOVING OUT OUR CONSULAR SECTION FROM THE FIRST FLOOR AT MOLONEY STREET WOULD TAKE MORE TIME. THE CONSULAR UNIT WOULD BE REINSTALLED ON THE GROUND FLOOR OF THE PRINCIPAL BUILDING AT OKOTIE EBOH, BUT ADDITIONAL PHONE LINES AND ELECTRIC POWER INSTALLATION WOULD BE REQUIRED BEFORE THE MOVE COULD BE STARTED. I SAID I WOULD WISH TO BE ABLE TO COUNT ON MEA'S PREVIOUS COMMITMENT TO INTERCEDE ON OUR BEHALF WITH THE ELECTRIC COMPANY AND P&T AUTHORITIES.

D. THE EMBASSY WOULD MOVE PERSONNEL, GSO AND BUDGET AND FISCAL OFFICES CURRENTLY IN KING'S COLLEGE ROAD TO OKOTIE EBOH AS SOON AS THOSE NEW QUARTERS COULD BE READIED. ONCE THAT MOVE IS COMPLETED, PAO, DEPUTY PAO, CAO AND PORTIONS OF THE INFORMATION OFFICE STAFF WILL MOVE FROM MOLONEY STREET TO KING'S COLLEGE ROAD. THIS WOULD CLEAR AN ADDITIONAL TWO FLOORS AT MOLONEY STREET WITH REMAINING USIS INFORMATION AND EXECUTIVE OFFICE FUNCTIONS AND VOA TO MOVE TO OKOTIE EBOH AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. THE REMAINING ONE-HALF FLOOR OCCUPIED BY FAA AND FAS COULD BE READILY AND PROMPTLY VACATED.

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7. I SAID THAT, IN ORDER FOR EMBASSY TO ACCOMPLISH THESE MOVES AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE, I NEEDED ADDITIONAL ASSISTANCE FROM THE FMG. FIRST, COULD THE FMG INTERCEDE WITH THE TWO LESSORS OF PROPERTIES LEASED TO US MORE THAN A YEAR AGO BUT OF WHICH WE WERE NOW BEING REFUSED OCCUPANCY BECAUSE THE LESSORS THOUGHT THEY

COULD GET HIGHER RENTS FROM OTHER TENANTS. I REPEATED OUR NEED FOR FMG ASSISTANCE IN OBTAINING PRIORITY SERVICES FROM THE POSER COMPANY AND P&T SO THAT NECESSARY ELECTRIC AND TELEPHONE INSTALLATIONS

COULD BE MADE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE. I ASKED WHETHER THE FMG COULD OBTAIN SUCH SERVICES FOR US GRATIS SINCE I ASSUMED THESE WERE PARASTATAL COMPANIES THAT WOULD IN EFFECT BE PROVIDING A SERVICE AS MUCH TO THE FMG AS TO THE US. FINALLY, I SAID WE REMAINED INTERESTED IN THE POSSIBILITY OF ACQUIRING LOT 14A NEXT TO OUR CHANCERY SITE. I STATED THAT FMG AGREEMENT TO THESE REQUESTS WOULD ENCOURAGE A MORE FORTHCOMING RESPONSE TO THE PRESENTATION I WOULD SUBMIT TO WASHINGTON AGENCIES.

8. IYALLA SAID THAT MY SCHEDULE OF PROPOSED MOVES WAS "IMMENSELY GRATIFYING." HE SAID THE MEA'S NOTE OF FORMAL NOTIFICATION WOULD BE IN MY HANDS JULY 12, STATING HE HAD WANTED TO HAVE THIS FINAL SESSION WITH ME BEFORE DRAFTING IT. HE SAID THE FMG WOULD NO LONGER OPPOSE A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF GRADUALISM IN OUR EXODUS. HIS JUSTIFICATION FOR BACKTRACKING ON THIS POINT WAS CURIOUS AND ONLY BARELY LOGICAL. HE SAID THAT "ONLY NOW HAVE WE LEARNED THAT ONE OF THE TEN FLOORS IS IN FACT OCCUPIED NOT BY YOU BUT BY A PRIVATE COMPANY." HE SAID THE FACT THAT WE HAVE BEEN ABLE TO OPERATE UNENCUMBERED BY THIS "ALIEN PRESENCE" (REAL ESTATE COMPANY INCORPORATED IN UK) WOULD INDICATE THAT "INSTALLATION OF FMG OFFICES WHILE SOME USG PERSONNEL STILL REMAINED AT MOLONEY STREET WAS FEASIBLE." I MADE CLEAR AT THAT POINT THAT I COULD NOT PREDICT HOW SOON OUR CONSULAR SECTION OR USIS COULD LEAVE MOLONEY STREET. I REPEATED THAT THIS WOULD HINGE UPON THE SPEED WITH WHICH THE NEW QUARTERS COULD BE FURNISHED.

9. CONCERNING THE TWO PROPERTIES TO WHICH WE HAVE BEEN DENIED ACCESS, IYALLA PROMISED TO CHECK ON THE STATUS OF THE MATTER AND "DO WHAT HE COULD."

10. IYALLA SAID HE HAD ALREADY INTERVENED PERSONALLY WITH THE MANAGING DIRECTOR OF NEPA, RECEIVING HIS ASSURANCE THAT OUR LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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NECESSARY ELECTRICAL INSTALLATIONS WOULD BE GIVEN ALL POSSIBLE PRIORITY. HE SAID HE WOULD NOW TALK WITH TELEPHONE AUTHORITIES, AND HE INSTRUCTED MGBOKWERE TO GIVE THE EMBASSY THE NAMES OF THOSE TECHNICIANS WITH WHOM WE COULD SUBSEQUENTLY DEAL DIRECTLY. I GAVE HIM A NOTE CONCERNING OUR PRECISE NEEDS.

11. AS FOR MY REQUEST THAT THESE SERVICES BE PROVIDED GRATIS, HOWEVER, IYALLA SAID "THAT IS THE SAME THING AS ASKING THE FMG TO FINANCE SOME OF YOUR MOVING COSTS, AND I MUST INSIST AGAIN THAT THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE." I SAID I THOUGHT THERE MIGHT NONETHELESS BE SOME BOOKKEEPING MECHANISM BY WHICH THIS COULD BE ARRANGED. HE DEMURRED AGAIN.

12. IYALLA SAID IT WAS "QUITE IMPOSSIBLE" TO CONSIDER EMBASSY ACQUISITION OF LOT 14A. CITING CURRENT INCREASINGLY CRITICAL SHORTAGES OF SPACE AND SEVERE PRESSURES FOR SUCH SPACE ON THE

LAGOS STATE GOVERNMENT AND THE LAGOS CITY COUNCIL, IYALLA SAID

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IT WOULD BE OUT OF THE QUESTION FOR HIM EVEN TO RAISE THIS ISSUE.

I REMINDED HIM THAT THE NEW EMBASSY CHANCERY SITE CONTAINED ONLY ABOUT TWO SQUARE ACRES OF LAND, WHEREAS ANOTHER EMBASSY WE KNOW, WITH A MUCH SMALLER STAFF, HAD BEEN GIVEN SOME FIVE ACRES (AUSTRALIA).

HE COUNTERED THAT WE WERE STILL BEING PERMITTED TO RETAIN THE KING'S COLLEGE ROAD PROPERTY (JUST UNDER ONE ACRE).

13. I RUGED IYALLA TO THINK AGAIN ABOUT THE QUESTION OF PROVIDING

RENT-FREE OCCUPANCY AT OKOTIE EBOH UNTIL OUR NEW CHANCERY IS
READY. I SAID I HAD NO REPEAT NO CONFIDENCE THAT THE DEPARTMENT
COULD FIND ANY MONEY WITH WHICH TO FINANCE THE COSTS OF THE MOVE,
BUT I THOUGHT THE POSSIBILITY OF OBTAINING AT LEAST SOME OF THESE
FUNDS WOULD BE IMMENSELY ENHANCED IF I COULD ASSURE WASHINGTON OF
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OCCUPANCY AS LONG AS WE WOULD NEED IT. IYALLA SAID
"ALLRIGHT - I WILL SO RECOMMEND BUT I CAN NOT PREDICT THE RESPONSE."

14. ACTION REQUESTED: WE ARE TAKING IMMEDIATE STEPS TO EMPTY
THE AID APARTMENTS AT ELSIE FEMI PEARSE IN ORDER TO VACATE AS
SCHEDULED IN PARA 6A THE FOUR AID FLOORS AT MOLONEY STREET, AND
WE ARE PROCEEDING WITH PLANNING AND ARRANGEMENTS TO ENABLE US TO
EFFECT THE OTHER MOVES LISTED ABOVE AS SOON AS FINAL AGREEMENT IS
REACHED WITH FMG. WHAT WE NOW URGENTLY REQUEST FROM THE DAPARTMENT
IS SUPPORT ON THE FINANCIAL ISSUE. THE ESTIMATES OF COST LISTED IN
REFTEL WERE CALCULATED FOR PURPOSE OF OUR PRESENTATION TO MEA.
IF WE RATHER THAN THE FMG MUST PAY THESE COSTS, COME OF THEM CAN
BE SLIGHTLY REDUCED. WE STILL ESTIMATE TOTAL NEW WXPENSE OVER TIME
AT AROUND \$360 THOUSAND. ROUGHLY ONE-THIRD OF THIS TOTAL WOULD NOT
REPEAT NOT BE NEEDED UNTIL NOVEMBER 1976, AT WHICH TIME WE WOULD HAVE
TO RENEW THE LEASE ON THE QUARTERS NOW TO BE OCCUPIED BY DISPLACED
AID PERSONNEL FROM ELSIE FEMI PEARSE.

15. CONSLUSION: I DO NOT REPEAT NOT BELIEVE IYALLA HAS ANY CHANCE OF
OBTAINING FMG AGREEMENT TO FINANCE ANY OF THE PROPOSED MOVING COSTS,
ALTHOUGH WE INTEND TO CONTINUE TO PRESS ON TELEPHONE AND POWER LINE
INSTALLATION EXPENSES. I THINK THE BEST BARGAIN WE CAN
REALISTICALLY EXPECT TO ACHIEVE IS FULL RENT-FREE OCCUPANCY AT
OKOTIE EBOH UNTIL THE NEW CHANCERY IS READY, IN RETURN FOR USG
FINANCING OF ALL MOVING AND INSTALLATION EXPENSES. EVEN FOR THIS,
IYALLA IS GOING TO HAVE TO FIGHT HARD. MEA WILL BE OBLIGES TO
OVERCOME OBJECTIONS FROM THOSE WHO WILL CITE OKOTIE EBOH
AS GILT-EDGED PROPERTY WHOSE LUCRATIVE
RENTAL INCOME SHOULD NOT BE FORESWORN IN A TIME
OF RAPID INFLATION IN REAL ESTATE MARKET. IT IS OUR BELIEF,
HOWEVER, THAT IF THE DEPARTMENT CAN PRMTPTLY AUTHORIZE US TO
TELL MEA THAT WE WILL FUND ALL MOVING AND INSTALLATION COSTS,
MEA WILL HAVE WHAT IT NEEDS FROM US TO ENABLE IT TO PRESS FOR FMG
COMMITMENT TO OPEN-ENDED RENT-FREE OCCUPANCY. I SEE LITTLE POINT IN
PROLONGING THE HAGGLING AND CONSIDERABLE HAZARD IF WE DO. THIS IS
PRECISELY ONE OF THE PROBLEMS WE HAVE BEEN FACING, THAT IS, WE
ARE VIEWED AS HAVING AVOIDED THIS ISSUE
FOR TWO YEARS RUNNING. WE
NEED TO REMOVE THIS CONTENTIOUS MATTER FROM BETWEEN US NOW. WE
HAVE BARGAIOED HARD OVERTHE PAST WEEKS.
WE HAVE SUCCEEDED, I BELIEVE, IN CONVINCING THE FMG OF OUR
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UNDERSTANDING OF THEIR SITUATION AND OUR COMMITMENT TO REACHING
MUTUALLY ACCEPTABLE, PROMPT AND AMICABLE SOLUTION. OUR POSITION
HAS BEEN FORTUNTOUSLY AND IRONICALLY STRENGTHENED BY BRIGADIER
OBASANJO'S ILL-CONSIDERED BLUNDER. PROVIDED THE DEPARTMENT (AND
OTHER AGENCIES) CAN FIND THE FUNDS TO PAY THE COSTS, THE FMG COMES
THROUGH ON WHAT WE HAVE ASKED OF IT, WE SEE A SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED
NEGOTIATION AS A FIRM STEP FORWARD IN OUR PROGRAM OF IMPROVING
THE US-NIGERIAN RELATIONSHIP. I WILL OF COURSE BE AVAILABLE
AT DEPARTMENT FROM JULY 17 TO DISCUSS, BUT EMBASSY WOULD APPRE-
CIATE YOUR RESPONSE PRIOR TO THAT TIME IF POSSIBLE.
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